

THE EVENING STAR

DATE 13 MAR 70 PAGE 3

Russians Deny Reports Of Split in Politburo

MOSCOW (UPI) — A Soviet spokesman said today that foreign reports of a split in the Russian Politburo are a "fabrication from beginning to end."

The reports yesterday said three members of the Politburo had written a letter criticizing Communist party secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev.

"All reports of such a letter are crude, malicious provocations emanating from those news services which in the past specialized in the dissemination of falsehood and are continuing to do the same," said Leonid Zamyatin, chief of the Foreign Ministry press department.

Substance of Reports

The reports, originating in Vienna and London, said that Alexander Shelepin, Mikhail Suslov, and Kiril Mazurov had issued a statement criticizing Brezhnev and Premier Alexei N. Kosygin for shortcomings and setbacks in Soviet agriculture and industry.

The reports said the three members of the Politburo were believed to have demanded a meeting of the Communist party leadership to discuss the situation.

There was no confirmation from any source abroad or here that such a statement or anything like it actually existed.

Qualified diplomatic observers here said that, given the nature of Soviet politics, the possibility of such statements by a minority of Politburo members should be ruled out.

Brezhnev himself conceded

earlier this year that difficulties exist in Russia's economy.

Pravda, the Communist party paper, said in January that the party Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet "took note of a lagging behind in the rate of development in a number of branches of industry and the slow growth of labor productivity and the efficiency of social production."

"There are great shortcomings in capital construction where the dissipation of investment has still not been overcome; efforts are not being concentrated as they should be on projects nearing completion."

A 22 Thursday, March 12, 1970 THE WASHINGTON POST

Kremlin Trio Said to Write Attack on Brezhnev, Kosygin

By Vincent Buist

Reuters

VIENNA, March 11—Reliable Communist sources in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia claimed today that dissension has crept into the inner circle of Soviet leadership over recurring failures in agriculture and industry.

In both Belgrade and Prague, reports circulated that Soviet party leader Brezhnev and Premier Kosygin have been accused of failing to meet needs in key economic sectors.

Three members of the ruling Soviet Politburo—Mikhail Suslov, Alexander Shelepin and Kirill Mazurov—have signed a document attacking the two leaders for serious shortcomings in party work affecting the economy, the reports claimed.

Belgrade reports said the three circulated a document for discussion at a forthcoming party central committee meeting. Reports from Prague said the three signed a letter accusing Brezhnev and Kosygin of responsibility for last year's disappointing results.

Meeting Called

Last week in Moscow, Brezhnev summoned the agricultural leaders of all 15 Soviet republics for discussions on agriculture and spring sowing.

The Soviet grain crop of 100.5 million tons last year fell below the 1968 crop of 101.3 million tons.

Suslov, now 68 and ailing, is not only the leading ide-

ologist of the party—one who has bridged the gulf between Stalinism and subsequent Soviet leadership—but is also regarded as the elder statesman of the Soviet establishment.

Western observers believe the mainspring behind the challenge is Shelepin, 51, the tough-talking labor union leader who rose rapidly after the fall of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964 but was subsequently stripped of many high party posts by Brezhnev. He is still regarded as a challenger for the top party position.

Mazurov, 55, has filled a number of key party and government posts and is at present first deputy chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers.

News of the secret Moscow letter has been filtered

to other capitals of Eastern Europe through labor union channels.

Western observers here said it was rare for Kremlin differences to emerge in this way. Usually any differences are aired in private at the top until a consensus can be formed. The leadership then presents a united front to lower levels.

If the reports are true, then the document represents one of the most serious attacks on the Soviet leadership since the so-called anti-party move against Khrushchev in 1957.

However, the Belgrade or Prague informants are anxious not to exaggerate the importance of the challenge.

Grechko Visit

Czechoslovak Communists link the Moscow report with a visit paid to their country in February by Marshal Andrei Grechko, the Soviet defense minister.

They believe Grechko warned that whatever might happen in Moscow there would be no relaxation of discipline in Czechoslovakia.

[In Washington, U.S. officials said they had had no word of such a document or of any challenge to the Kremlin leadership. Officials did point out that Brezhnev's speech at the December meeting on economic problems has never been published and that the central committee last week circulated a letter within the Soviet Union discussing how to improve economic efficiency and management.]